



For immediate release:
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NEWS RELEASE

WATCHDOG GROUPS UNVEIL “ROADMAP” TO CURBING CORRUPTION IN NEW YORK, KICKING OFF THEIR *RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST* CAMPAIGN

URGE GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE TO TAKE SPECIFIC, CONCRETE STEPS TO RESPOND TO TIDAL WAVE OF SCANDALS

2018 LEGISLATIVE SESSION WILL TAKE PLACE AGAINST BACKDROP OF RAFT OF CORRUPTION TRIALS

Reacting to the State of the State Address, New York’s leading civic organizations today kicked off a *Restore Public Trust* campaign that called on Governor Cuomo and legislative leaders to adopt a package of reforms to help restore public confidence in state government.

The groups say the six upcoming corruption trials of high ranking former public officials that begin this month are unprecedented and alarming, and actions must be taken:

- On January 22nd, the scheduled trial¹ of Joseph Percoco, former executive deputy secretary to the Governor;
- February 5th, the scheduled trial² of former New York State Senator George Maziarz;
- March 12th, the scheduled trial³ of Edward Mangano, former Nassau County executive;
- April 16th, the scheduled retrial⁴ of former state Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver;
- On May 15,⁵ the scheduled trial of former SUNY Polytechnic Institute President and CEO Alain Kaloyeros; and
- On June 18th, the scheduled retrial⁶ of former Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos.

The defendants in these cases are entitled to the presumption of innocence; however, these trials are the latest installment in a seemingly unending series of investigations, indictments, and convictions into the corrupt actions of dozens of public officials. Indeed, New York has been repeatedly dubbed as one of, if not the most, corrupt states in the nation. At least 33 legislators have left office since 2000 due to corruption-related issues.

The groups urged the state's leaders to approve a package of *Restore Public Trust* reforms that includes:

- **Clean Contracting.** Basic accountability measures that would result in an open, ethical, and efficient way to award government contracts, an area which was identified as a key problem in the indictments of the governor's top aides.
- **Real Budget Transparency.** Make lump-sum budget appropriations and the resulting expenditures fully transparent.
- **Ban "Pay to Play."** Strict "pay to play" restrictions on state vendors. The U.S. Attorney's charges that \$800m in state contracts were rigged to benefit campaign contributors to the governor underscores the need to strictly limit contributions from those seeking state contracts.
- **Close "LLC Loophole"** that allows essentially unlimited campaign contributions via Limited Liability Companies. LLCs have been at the heart of some of Albany's largest scandals.
- **Strict Limits on Outside Income.** Real limits on the outside income for legislators and the executive branch. Moonlighting by top legislative leaders and top members of the executive branch has triggered indictments by the federal prosecutors.
- **Effective Watchdogs.** Truly independent, effective, well-resourced, ethics enforcement agencies are needed (*e.g.* JCOPE, SBOE, ABO).

¹ <http://buffalonews.com/2017/12/29/trial-of-former-cuomo-aide-delayed-two-weeks/>

² http://www.niagara-gazette.com/news/local_news/maziarz-trial-delayed-till-february/article_75623629-4df4-537c-9468-bb3d479da732.html

³ <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2017/12/05/ed-mangano-trial-date/>

⁴ <http://news10.com/2017/08/15/potential-retrial-date-set-for-sheldon-silver/>

⁵ <http://www.timesunion.com/7day-state/article/Percoco-Kaloyeros-trial-split-into-two-11299155.php>

⁶ <https://www.newsday.com/long-island/nassau/skelos-corruption-retrial-1.14703245>



BY HAND

January 2, 2018

Governor Cuomo
Executive Chamber
Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12234

Senate Majority Leader Flanagan
Capitol Building
Room 330
Albany, NY 12247

Senate Co-Leader Klein
Legislative Office Bldg.
Room 913
Albany, NY 12247

Sen. Min. Leader Stewart-Cousins
Legislative Office Bldg.
Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Assembly Speaker Heastie
Legislative Office Bldg.
Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

Assm. Min. Leader Kolb
Legislative Office Bldg.
Room 933
Albany, NY 12248

Re: Urgent Actions Needed To Restore Public Trust

Dear Messrs. Cuomo, Flanagan, Klein, Heastie, Kolb and Ms. Stewart-Cousins:

During the upcoming session New Yorkers will be confronted by headlines from more than a half-dozen high profile corruption trials. In the first half of the year, former top aides in the executive branch and the Upstate bid-rigging scandal will be center stage. At the same time, there will be the retrials of the former leaders of the Assembly and Senate, and the trials of a former state Senator, and prominent local officials.

The public will expect you to pass real reforms that help restore trust in government and put an end to the endless series of scandals that have given New York a national reputation, dubbed by the *Center for Advancement of Public Integrity*, as one of the most corrupt states in the country.

Today, we are calling on you to pass an aggressive package of *Restore Public Trust* reforms that includes:

- **Clean Contracting.** Strict new accountability measures that would result in an open, ethical, and efficient way to award government contracts, an area which was identified as a key problem in the indictments of the governor’s top aides.
- **Real Budget Transparency.** Make lump-sum budget appropriations and the resulting expenditures fully transparent.
- **Ban “Pay to Play.”** Strict “pay to play” restrictions on state vendors. The investigation by the U.S. Attorney’s office into allegations that state contracts were rigged to benefit campaign contributors to the governor underscores the need to strictly limit contributions from those seeking contracts.
- **Close “LLC Loophole.”** That allows essentially unlimited campaign contributions via Limited Liability Companies. LLCs have also been at the heart of some of Albany’s most troubling scandals.
- **Strict Limits on Outside Income.** Real limits on the outside income for legislators and the executive branch. Moonlighting by top legislative leaders and top members of the executive branch has triggered indictments by the federal prosecutors.
- **Effective Watchdogs.** Truly independent, effective, well-resourced, ethics enforcement agencies are needed (*e.g.* JCOPE, SBOE, ABO).

We look forward to working with you all on these and any other measures that you think are important to help restore public trust in their government.

Sincerely,

Alan Rothstein
Citizens Union of the City of New York

Susan Lerner
Common Cause/NY

Laura Ladd Bierman
League of Women Voters/N.Y.S.

Blair Horner
NYPIRG

John Kaehny
Reinvent Albany